POETRY QUARTERLY

edited by Wrey Gardiner
and published by The Grey Walls Press
7 Crown Passage, Pall Mall

VOLUME 9, NO. 1, SPRING 1947

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL *page* 3
PAUL ELUARD: *Dawn Dissolves Monsters* 4
GEORG TRAKL: *The Damned* 5
MANUEL ALTOLAGUIRRE: *Toast* 6
PABLO NERUDA: *How Spain Used To Be* 7
Atacama 7
RUDI NASSAUER: *At Midday in the Middle of the Week* 8
JOSEPH CHIARI: *Tristan* 10
KENNETH PATCHEN: *For Miriam* 12
O Sleeping Lay the Maiden Snow 12
Notes for the Death of the World 13
Where Some Beast has Torn the Grass 13
NORMAN NICHOLSON: *The Anatomy of Desire* 14
ALEX COMFORT: *It is Expedient that One Man Die for the People* 16
HAMISH HENDERSON: *Acroma* 18
ALEC CRAIG: *The Innocents* 19
H. B. MALLALIEU: *The Familiar Room* 20
Europe 21

ERNEST M. FROST: *Poem* page 22
JOHN LARKMAN: *Three Poems* 23
GEORGE REAVEY: *Admonition* 24
JOHN ATKINS: *Poem* 24
ALAN ROSS: *Village of Candles* 25
NICHOLAS MOORE: *Frozen Fingers* 26
We All Know the Villain Well 27
V. DE S. PINTO: *Unrhymed Sonnet* 27
N. K. CRUICKSHANK: *Divine Comedy* 28
WILLIAM PORRITT: *Who Insist the Rose* 29
DEREK STANFORD: *The Statue in the Wood* 30
JOHN BAYLISS: *To a Ghost* 31
MARGARET CROSLAND: *Deserted Farm* 32
JAMES KIRKUP: *The Last Eyes* 32
Fire and Snow 33
DANNIE ABSE: *Lady of Black Hair* 34
ROLANT GANT: *The Wedding* 35
T. R. GLOVER: *Song* 35
G. A. WAGNER: *Oxford* 37
IGNACE M. INGIANNI: *Night Piece* 37
G. S. FRASER: *The Poetry of Nicholas Moore* 38
DEREK STANFORD: *The Gallic Theme* 46
REVIEWS BY FRED MARNAU, ALEX COMFORT, ALAN ROSS, ERNST SIGLER 53

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

6s. per annum, including postage, or 1s. 7d. per copy. Subscriptions, contributions and all correspondence should be addressed to THE GREY WALLS PRESS, 7, Crown Passage, Pall Mall, London, S.W.1, accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope if a reply is desired.

Although unsolicited MSS. are read with care, owing to pressure of work, they cannot always be returned at once. nor can the Editor undertake any responsibility for such MSS., a copy of which should be retained by the author. In case of acceptance, a proof will be sent before publication.

Typography by Seán Jennett

EDITORIAL

Only tragedy, it appears, can awake the world to the truth and value of the poet's vision. Our professional pundits have to be brought to the radio to arouse us to a sense of the horror and unreality of what is being created for us by the so-called practical men. It may be that we are in sight of the final dissipation of the unhappy myth of nationalism. There are signs and stirrings among us that some understanding of geographical realities may move us a step towards the true world of necessary love and interdependence where there are no fantastic and unreal 'nations' but humanity which is much the same in any part of the world, just men and women who want to eat and drink a little, make love and live for something more noble than the hidden intrigues of power politics, oil diplomacy and monopoly finance. For some time past we have advocated a closer understanding with poets writing in other countries. Internationalism is the wrong word. We feel that although these poets write in different languages, and sometimes in vastly different manners, what they are saying may more often than not be much the same thing. To reunite the great spirits of the world in their continental isolation is an ideal worth working for.

We are glad to introduce in this issue poems by the Chilean Pablo Neruda, the greatest of the South American poets, and three new poems from Kenneth Patchen, the most challenging writer in the U.S.A. to-day, also an English translation from the French of Eluard, who is probably one of the most important poets writing in Europe now. The critical study of the poetry of Nicholas Moore by G. S. Fraser is the first of a series of which one will appear in every issue of POETRY QUARTERLY. Each article will be by one of the younger generation of critics, and will deal with the work of a poet whom we consider to have achieved a position of importance likely to influence the development of the verse being written to-day.

Poetry is the perquisite of the sane in a mad world, even if the poet is, perhaps, called mystic or fool. It has been possible of late to see a drawing together of disparate tendencies, a realization, before the imminence of atomic destruction of all our unities. John of Ruysbroeck, the Flemish mystic, wrote 'a man feels himself to be gathered together with all his powers in the unity of his heart. Unity brings inward peace and restfulness of heart. Unity of heart is a bond which draws together body and soul, heart and senses, and all the outward and inward powers and encloses them in the union of love.'

PAUL ELUARD

Dawn Dissolves Monsters

They knew not
That beauty of man is greater than man

They lived to think they thought to be silent
They lived to die they were of no use
They veiled their innocence in death

They had put in order
Under the name of wealth
Their wretchedness their beloved

They chewed flowers and smiles
Hearts they found only at a rifle's end

They understood not the insults of the poor
Of the poor to-morrow untroubled

Sunless dreams made them eternal
But that the cloud might change into mud
They descended they faced the sky no more

All their night their death their fine shadow misery
Misery for others

We shall forget these indifferent foes
Soon a crowd
Will repeat the clear flame in a very soft voice
The flame for us two for us alone patience.
For us two anywhere the kiss of the living

(*Translated by* CLAUDE APCHER)

GEORG TRAKL

The Damned

I

At dusk old women walk towards the spring.
In the dark of chestnuts laughter of red.
Out of a shopdoor flows a smell of bread;
Over the fence sunflowers slowly sink.

Noise from the river-inn, faint and slight.
The money's tinkling clang; humming guitar;
A gloriole falls on the small girl's hair
Who waits before the glassdoor, soft and white.

O the blue glow which on the panes she wakes,
Black and enraptured in a frame of thorns.
A hunchbacked clerk who smiles as if entranced
Into the water which wild tumult shakes.

II

At night the pestilence hems her blue gown,
And gently shuts the door a gloomy guest.
Now through the window sinks the tree's black waist;
A youth entrusts his brow into her hand.

Often her eyelids sink heavy and sore.
The hands of the child are flowing through her hair
And his tears come rushing hot and clear
Into her orbits lying black and bare.

A nest of scarlet-coloured serpents stems
Lazily against her hollow womb.
The arms release a deadness to its tomb
Which by a carpet's melancholy is hemmed.

III

In the brown garden sounds a chiming bell.
A blueness hovers in the chestnut's dark
And in an unknown woman's honeyed cloak.
The scent of mignonette; the burning feel

Of evil. The moist brow bows cold and pale
Down over garbage where the rat burrows,
Around it washes scarlet glow of stars,
And dank and weak in the garden apples fall.

The night is black. The southwind ghostlike wails
Through the white nightgown of the walking youth.
The hand of deadness gently in his mouth
Lays hold. And soft and lovely, Sonia smiles.

(*Translated by* ERNST SIGLER)

MANUEL ALTOLAGUIRRE

Toast

Leave the wine on the table. Gaze, see how
the profound distances of a new winter—
firewood and clouds, aridity and cold—
appear unfathomable and fantastic.
Let us drink more. And let our spirits be
of ash and gauze that they may separate
the infinite and tangled wood of death.
Let them invade the winter of the thorn
and let the spiders' webs be torn apart
and let the white and quiet smoke divide.
May our abandoned flesh be all forgotten
and fall insensibly to dust, that we
may stay in these grey penances for ever.
Drink, for the air is blind. Drink on and see
the deep and merciless winter expand,
held in submission by its clouded lights.

Myself I judge and bury. Mine a future
of water fathomless and dry and cold.

PABLO NERUDA

How Spain Used to Be

Spain used to be taut and dry, diurnal
drum of opaque timbre,
flatland and nest of eagles, silence
of the lashed outdoors.

How, unto tears, unto the soul
I love your hard soil, your poor bread,
your poor people, how unto the deep recesses
of my being there is the lost flower of your wrinkled
villages, immobile in time,
and your mineral fields
stretched out in moon and in age
and devoured by an empty god.

All your structures, your animal
isolation together with your intelligence
surrounded by the abstracted stones of silence,
your rough wine, your smooth
wine, your dry
and sweet vines.

Solar stone, pure among the regions
of the world. Spain travelled
by bloods and metals, blue and victorious
proletarian of petals and bullets, the only one
alive and sleepy and sonorous.

Atacama

Insufferable voice! Disseminated
salt, substituted
ashes, black bough
at whose bejewelled tip appears the blind
moon, through mourning corridors of copper,
What substance, what hollow swan
sinks its agonic nudeness in the sand
and petrifies its slow and liquid light?
What solid ray shatters its emerald

among its indomitable stones to the point
of coagulating the lost salt?
Land, land
over the sea, over the air, over the galloping
amazon laden with corals,
heaped storehouse where wheat
sleeps in the tremulous root of the bell:
O! mother of ocean, producer
of blind jasper and golden silica:
over your pure skin of bread, far from the forest
only your lines of secret,
only your forehead of sand,
only the nights and days of man,
but next to the thirst of the thistle, there
where a sunken and forgotten paper, a stone
marks the deep cradles of sword and goblet,
indicates the sleeping feet of calcium.

(*Translated by* ANGEL FLORES)

RUDI NASSAUER

. . . Aber es gibt etwas, was furchtbarer ist: die Stille.'
RILKE ('Malte Laurids Brigge')

At midday in the middle of the week,
or any ordinary time in the city,
you may see it, or observe it for a quiet hour
away, perhaps at night, when a thousand possibilities
are colourless, where,—as I have to mention laughter,—
fear may follow folly and tear
as a child, saintlike, without religion;
or any time in barriers of crowded
railway stations you may hear the orator
address his wound: 'do not heal, darling,
not yet; we must leave ourselves open for a time'.
Or you may see him late at night
walk home alone.
'It is easier in company' he thinks, 'to forget
sailing round the world, to find secure pleasure
like the wind.

It is easier to forget in company
than find oneself alone, dissatisfied.'

But from a thousand entrances I choose midday,
when the sun-high heat may break the steel,
when meeting hands may offer the heart roses;
because midday is a centre in itself
sometimes forgotten, an axle-point,
a silent focus without terminus of stillness,
a birth, a death,
without interruption.

Midday's still death makes a meeting;
voices wave, voices wave
to the far shore of goodbyes
where no meeting was a greeting
nearer than an outstretched hand.

I see him stand still at twelve o'clock
whilst the city like a merry-go-round
swings round him from his arms
sings, laughs and swings.

Midday dying in the city
spell to him a hope for winter
when companions must depart
whom he could not cast aside

who at midday left him standing
in the stillness of the knowledge
that his love was all he knew
besides silence.

One past twelve I heard him say
passing the flower girl selling forget-me-nots:
'do not heal, darling, do not go away, my hope,
not yet; we must leave ourselves open for a time'.

JOSEPH CHIARI

Tristan

Tristan, sad name,
loom over which love and death
weaved the legend of fame
the web of life on earth.

The wound of his heart
guided his ship to the distant shores,
where golden leaves
hid the source of life.

From there the voyage to the unwanted king
away from the Green Isle
across the seas
with the sea wind swelling their sails
and the balm of Iseult's face,
marble and sapphire in a July harvest.
Both carefree until that day
when the sun weighed heavily on the water,
like a coffin lid on dead bones,
and when mischievous, merciless fate
poured in their parched veins
the magic philtre which made of them one
like the compass and the magnetic pole.

Tintagel Castle,
Venerable trees,
churches of the earth, patient witnesses
of that Androgyne couple,
rocks swept by the surge,
hearts swept by elemental waves
shaking the human frame to the bones,
like white pebbles washed by restless waves,
gaping desires, angers, betrayals,
love, wasted love,
lavished upon one
who had been so bewitched by love,
that the earth could have crumbled down
and the heart could have turned to stone
unnoticed by her who belonged to another sun.

Unhappy Tristan lying on distant shores,
listening to the rustle of the tide,
waiting for the white sail,
waiting for life, waiting for death.
It was not the pains of the body,
but the pains of the heart
from which he could not recover,
and Iseult with the white hands
could not heal the wound
through which the will to live had fled.
Pure Iseult, faithful wife,
yet never wife,
presented with a heart as empty as a husk,
and which could not split into parts
equal for loves equally compelling.

White hands, microcosms of suffering,
symbols of purity untarnished,
crystalline waters, reflecting the image
transparent from the virgin heart.
But always, in the distance,
the eyes pale blue like the northern seas,
and the name Iseult
which the wind or the breeze
and the sea-gulls with their sharp shrills
brought to his fevered ears.
And no clouds, but the scorching sun
burning in his veins,
with visions of freshness and endless rains
and the golden sheaves of Iseult's hair
hiding them from the lonely stars.

There on the shores of Brittany, the last moments,
the preparation for the voyage beyond the seas,
the ashes of the heart, the torments,
the silence before the eternal silence,
the piercing absence before the final void,
the burning loneliness of hands,
empty, shaping the shadow
of the haunting face, the vision of distant lands,
and the wind, sinister voice, low,
repeating the name to the waves,

lifting their white heads to listen,
or to the twisted trees, overwhelmed, grave,
moaning, mourning their dying brother,
the name, talisman which wielded them together
and with which, with his last breath,
he tried to repel lonely death.

KENNETH PATCHEN

For Miriam

O my dearest
While the sun still spends its fabulous money
For the kingdoms in the eye of a fool,
Let us continue to waste our lives
Declaring beauty to the world

Let us continue to praise truth and justice
Though the eyes of the stars turn black
And the smoking juice of the universe,
Like the raptured brain of God,
Pours down upon us in a final consecration

O Sleeping Lay the Maiden Snow

O sleeping lay the maiden snow
  Upon the branches of the city
And oh my love was warm beside me

O nearer came the rush of dark wings
  Over the dream of my people
And oh my heart was full of pain their pain

O sleeping lay the maiden snow
  Upon the bitter roofs of the world
But ah! my love was safe in my arms

Notes for the Death of the World

a living heart under the rubble
flesh caught in the wheel
white rain of hell
on the soft pitiful lives of men

O what shall become of the laughter of children?

a sour spit falls on our lives

O what shall become of the beauty of women?

the dreams sputter out
like candles in the belly of a snake

a pit of bleeding eyes

white tongues flicking in and out
of the cave

O what shall become of the voices of lovers?
—living bodies—
Horses
Lilies
Trees
Men

and oh we shall all have been made equal
then

Where Some Beast has Torn the Grass

Where some beast has torn the grass
A gentle breeze crosses
O always do men turn
To hate when they have nothing better to do

Where fiery beasts have levelled cities
A peaceful wind blows
O not always do men turn
To love when they have nothing better to do.

NORMAN NICHOLSON

The Anatomy of Desire

The anatomy of desire
Is not a living thing
Like blood in arm
Or sap in stem;
Not from the shouldering bone
Do love's limbs hang,
Nor the wooden skeleton
Of sleep-walking tree.

The anatomy of desire
Is not like fire—
Insensate spirit
Swift as a wish.
Flowers of flame
Unbud in a glim
Of crimson, a simmer
Of smouldering down:
Florescence of trumpets,
Rays, globes,
Thistle-head and mussel-shell
Lobes, that blaze
With filamented stamens
And sparks of pollen
Under the heavy
White hawthorn of the skies;
Weeds of no root
With flint for seed,
Cinders for fruit,
That shoot in a gush
Of burning green
When what has been
Becomes what is,
When tree turns to ash,
And flesh to ghost,
In the flash and recoil
Of the volleys of change,
The bursting blossoms
Of the volatile soil.

Fresh flowers
And flower burns
And fire returns
To bone and ash;
Ash and bone
Are broken, ground
To worm-bread, worm-cast.
When the soil is cut
Like a festering wound
From the earth's breast,
Earth's heart is shown—
A cold round stone.
Earth's heart is bare,
And no fire glows
Nor flower grows there,
Where adolescent ages
Of herb and hair
Are frozen, soldered,
Tombed in stone.
Only the rain
Soaks in the grain
Leaving the stain
Of a wet winter sunset
Above smoky dunes;
Only the wind
With cat's-tongue breath
Weathers and worries
Stone and air together.

In autumn the mist is brown as the turned earth;
Pimpernel and speedwell sparkle in the soil
Blear-eyed before evening. Barbed wire
Is tangled like witch's broom in elms.
Thistles the colour of string have split their feather pillows,
And grandad beards of sheep's wool wag on the thorns.
The stone lies among straw, cow-dung and cartwheels,
And dust spreads like a crust over blind eyes.
Lichens hatch out—a green or rusty smudge,
Like acid burns, or a dried gob of phlegm;
And then the cuticle grows up the nail,
And roots corrode and probe, breaking, dissolving the stone,

Till a new dust is ploughed in the bone-dry soil.
And now the heart of Silurian ferns
Burns again in foxglove and fireweed,
Fir-cone and briar.
The anatomy of desire
Is only a stone.

ALEX COMFORT

It is Expedient that One Man Die for the People

On this round hill the wind
parts about me like water. In the valley
crops growing hedge high fall to a flat pattern

a sickle of beach reaps
oncoming lanes of sea as tall as grass
a shining edge worn level by long use

the swathes of water, shallow
sandhill footprints that run every way
the footprints of wind flaws on sides of water

flow to the frontier, meet
between the dry-shod stable country there
and an unsteady floor where no feet walk

meeting place of two states
the seasons and the wind clothe and unclothe
foot-stable life and death's unsteady motion

the whole land and the sick.
And either life or death is the null point
the foursquare balance, the unmoving place.

The level light I breathe
falls in a tearless harvest, the whole pattern
grown sour as brine when I remember them

the men become unreal
extinguished save as symbols and cold winds
and names, the undischarged gratuitous debts.

Rivers that carry sand
the aimless sunlight and the aimless birds
spin coloured threads, say Peace, speak the word Living—

but the dead have bought this place
and either I or they stand firm, and one
flows round the other's coast in many waves.

No one should die for me.
Seeking no loan I find that they have bought
this plain where war lies some feet underground

and on this hill I say
that no one, anywhere, should for my life
enter that cold innominate mouthless sea.

Whether their credit holds
the fields are sourer for their dried-up mouths
No poem is worth the face of one of them.

I feel the stable land
more dead perhaps than any field of sea.
The sea will have the bones of this round hill.

Roads in the water where
the fresh springs rise like oil, roads meeting and parting
between the grain, each other's mirror self

meet at the curved shore.
The waves that shed tears on that barrier
in history's level balance cast their question.

HAMISH HENDERSON

Acroma

Planning and execution
recede: the preliminary inertia,
the expectation, the lull, the relaxing and the encounter s
suddenness recede, become history: thrusts, seiges and feints
that still blood maps with arrows
and left dead like refuse, these are the basis
of battle studies. And we're no better. The lying films
contain greater truth than most of our memories.
And the participants?—Staff Officers consider,
discuss and record their provisional verdicts.
These were go-getters, professional outflankers,
capable assault troops, or specialists in night warfare;
while those others had guts and lacked training, yet put up
a decent enough show at Himeimat or Munassib.
Occasionally there are doubts, dispute becomes acrimonious,
the case is not proven, judgment must be deferred.
On one point, however, there is unanimity; their sacrifice,
though hard and heroic, was on the whole 'necessary'.
I too have acquiesced
in this evasion: that the unlucky
or the destined must inevitably fall
and be impaled on the basalt pinnacles of darkness.
Yet how can I shame them, saying that they
have died for us: that it was expedient
a generation should die for the people?

To justify them, what byways must I follow?
Into what inaccessible sierras
of naked acceptance, where mere reason cannot live,
where love shines like a glacier. Could I ever attain it?
Neither by dope of reportage, nor by anodyne of statistics
is *their* lot made easier: laughing couples at the tea-dance
ignore their memory, the memoirs almost slight them
and the queue forming up to see Rangers play Celtic
forms up without thought to those dead.—O, to right them
what requiem must I sing in the ears of the living?

No blah about their sacrifice: rather tears or reviling
of the time that took them, than an insult so outrageous.
All barriers are down: in the criss-crossed enclosures
where most lie now assembled in their aching solitude
those others lie too—who were also the sacrificed
of history's great rains, of the destructive transitions.
This one beach, where high seas have disgorged them like flotsam
reveals in its nakedness their ultimate alliance.

So the words that I have looked for, and must go on looking for,
are words of whole love, which can slowly gain the power
to reconcile and heal. Other words would be pointless.

ALEC CRAIG

The Innocents

Now the snowdrops, fragile headstones
tell the number of the pure
crushed beneath the shield of hunger,
impaled upon the sword of cold,
in the holy land of Europe,
in the coasts of dead Cologne.

What judgment passes the white light
of stern spring on the winter slaughter?
Little blame for the legionaries?
Contempt for the feasting consuls?
Silence for the excuses of the imperial power?
(Though even Herod did not say
he was re-educating the children.)
None of these. The divine justice knows
no gradual between the scales.
We either see, or do not see, the star.

H. B. MALLALIEU

The Familiar Room

Tears on the glass of our restraint, the rain
Beats on the window, prodding like a clock
The silence in this room. Drunken roses
Sprawl under the lustre; discreetly
Petals fall upon the tablecloth.
Time's imperceptible shedding of its leaves
Surprises us as naked winter comes.
Only the roses in the light are moving,
Or a curtain rustles: distraction of images,
Silence confused by anagrams of meaning.
Our words fumble, hands groping for a switch
Afraid of the feel of roses. But we remember.

After long years meeting upon the bridge.
There was a sudden lull within the city,
The river sealed into a painter's dream.
An immortal stillness seemed to fall
Over the crooked houses, in the streets
Where the amazed pigeons paused in flight.
In that mature illusion of our love,
Roses reflected in the shining glass,
We did not claim the beauty as our own
But somewhere in between. The world outside
Turned in towards us, tilted on a kiss.

So much I would have you understand
If words could narrow this enormous room;
But understanding without love is nothing,
An inventory made after the disaster.
We cannot raise our voice above the rain,
Nor find our way together to the bridge.
Our hands cannot join even in memory,
Nor span this distance our words make wider.

Europe

The shuttered windows in Vienna streets,
Shuffling women in the rainy dawn, waiting for bread,
The shattered tanks among the broken masonry,
Hunger in eyes and empty, useless hands:
Peace is the listless, chilling wind that scatters
Torn paper, dead leaves, the ruins of a summer.

Southward I heard
An ironic voice upon the hill of Mars
Echo inside the temple made with hands;
And candles burned upon the scarred hillsides,
Mourning with tears of light over new graves:
Heard mountains wake to rifle's stuttering
And a cry muffled by snow.

Northward I saw
The stag running: a masque of haunted faces,
Suspicious eyes behind raised glasses,
Ice cracking along the Elbe. Dancing
In a dead city: scavengers in damp streets
Behind lorries or searching for cigarettes:
Fingers scratching among the rubble.

Westward I turned
Where the broken glass of laughter fell
In deserted corridors and treaties lie
Under the lake. The emigrant eye
Looks out across the ever-narrowing seas.
There are many hands moving behind curtains:
Talking in locked rooms, people silently
Going different ways through the rainy cities,
Confusion in subways, muttered apology.

And Eastward
Where the crooked cross fell under the hammer
And bridges lie heaped into the river, I saw
Prisoners returning bitterly from the tundra.
A star rises across the crumpled evening,
Lights without pity the huddled figures
Who waited for a sign and know now
There will be no miracle.

ERNEST M. FROST

Poem

Taking the sword and feeling its sharp edge
was memory. This was the violent sacrament,
or a bright water cutting, or the sun
hauled from the sky by the frost at morning
while we lay in the winter with these swords
planted around us.

Taking the bowl and feeling its long curve
was beauty. This rolled between the dreamer
and the dream. This was the smoothest ledge
of the round world. Smooth there to lie
the sleep was shaped like bowls in which the dream
rolled all about us.

Taking the lute and hearing its long note
was mystery. This was the world laid bare
and on its bone the walking nerve prepared
like Lazarus to march to paradise. Within the ear
what kingdoms and what creatures lay in wait, while
heaven announced us?

Taking the sword to rust it with the years,
taking the bowl to fill it with Christ's tears,
taking the lute to sound the final phrase—
the body toppling into death's hard straits,
would these revoke us?

But taking light and wearing it in folds
was sanctity. Light that would answer all—
the rust of memory, the flawed, the failing bowl,
the music never uttered when the door
closed upon death: Light that we so desire
come to create us.

JOHN LARKMAN

Three Poems

The night is soft and heavy,
strange like a tropic flower.
I leave my room and walk down to the quay
where the five coloured sailors are singing by the water.
Standing by the ship's-side I listen to their music
watching the waves wash slowly in from the far sea.

Merciless city
spreading out like a dark hand,
your fingers curving desperately
cannot hold on for long.

In your houses children lie
dreaming out the passion of the sun.
Yet over the river a bird passes
with cold crying in its wings.

O doomed city
chained under a pitted sky,
caught in your restless palm
men die
hurting one another.

You were restless and longed for darkness
and the cold streets where there in no pity.

At night when you slept in my arms
with your dark head soft at my side,
I prayed that my hands might have mercy
and the power to calm.

But you were restless and longed for darkness,
for the cruel streets where there is no pity.

GEORGE REAVEY

Admonition

This shirt's defence unbutton one by one,
Hell's gateway green or heaven's cloudy door,
Divulge: come, pull locked characters apart,
Discovered battling in the fugue of feud;

O come, assign them to the moon and sun,
Their gnarled and grappling selves dissever, draw
The hieroglyphics of their passions' chart,
The plotted runes of their one chiming end;

Or see them split in ruin on the floor,
Like twisted oaks by hungry lightning hewed,
That, toppling, this one world together rend;
O magic-make them two with your great saw,

Whom fate has tangled in the coils of hate:
But hurry or the clock will strike too late.

JOHN ATKINS

Poem

The world moves in innocence
as I lie on my bed;
a thousand blames attach their vicious points
to fashioned stones,
attractive in the blue and red
of individual symbols sapped in all their joints.

My understanding feebly tricks its life
in copious lines
which wander blind about my puzzled head.
The men I know
are cast like brilliant signs
against the dull anonymity of the dead.

ALAN ROSS

Village of Candles

Five candles for memory and for light.
September laid out amongst white tables
September laid out like hands intermingled.
I give you one candle for memory and for to-night.

Alcohol disposes of time and of music.
Conversation moves after silences of spirit
Conversation moves after hearts in hospital.
I give you one candle for souls that were sick.

Five candles for memory and for light.
Evening is roses arranged around fingers
Evening is brotherhood because of no other.
I give you one candle for faith that still lingers.

Behind eyelids the future is conceived.
Girls make love with pressure of knees
Girls' faces sink at the bottom of glasses.
I give you one candle for the cure of war's disease.

Five candles for memory and for light.
Shadows of winter fall like a dropscene
Shadows of winter make masks of faces.
I give you one candle for love and for to-night.

Germany

NICHOLAS MOORE

Frozen Fingers

For Charles Wrey Gardiner

It is not the place wherein I walk,
Oxford Street on a cold and wintry
January day, or the ice in the air,
Or a merely physical pleasure

That stings me with a memory of pleasure
Long past, nor the indolent talk
Of Test Matches and England's defeated air
In these contests—it is something wintry

In the heart, in the mind, where the usual wintry
Significances bring no casual pleasure
Any more, where the snowbound air
Is perilous, and horridulous ghosts can walk.

On the safe surface of the world, walk
And be free. And this disbelief in pleasure
Or its possibilities turns us all wintry,
And the ghosts strike in the sudden and frightened air

Like chill fingers upon our pleasures. Air,
The snowy air, becomes not the pleasure of wintry
Symbolism, but a breathless cold on our walk
In search of life's final area of pleasure.

All this is romantic, Charles. We return to pleasure
As a small boy to his toys. And the mummified air
Of this day and time holds us, poets, in its wintry
Arms and we differently, and in diffidence, walk.

We All Know the Villain Well

Old-fashioned metres fit the archaic bull:
The pope of poetry works overtime:
He's learnt in age both how to push and pull.

The old man's hoary locks! His ears are full
Of fully-fashioned visions, knit with rhyme—
Old fashioned metres fit the lust-led bull.

To plagiarise, to pluck, to pimp, to cull
The wayside flower—that's all pantomime,
Old pantaloon who's learnt to push and pull.

(But that's the art of every favoured fool.
To push and pull—that's how they learnt to climb.
He's only imitating Jove's fat bull.)

To trick, and take, and rape the beautiful—
Then serve it up for others as 'sublime'—
Under this threshold all is push or pull.

Praise flies to meet all ears well-stuffed with wool.
Mere critics are ignored, as fits their crime,
Or trampled under foot by Time's just bull.

Ah! sharers of a hatred for the dull
Bad pope of poetry whose overtime
Works hard for well-shelled crabs who push and pull,
Come, mock with me the fervour of that bull.

V. DE S. PINTO

Unrhymed Sonnet

Ragged gusty clouds of steam are blowing
    From a small locomotive fussily puffing,
    They drift across the sky and their fantastic shapes
Are mirrored in the shining puddles on the platform.

Wild are my thoughts, wild ragged gusty clouds,
My body a small locomotive puffing up and down
Along well-oiled rails of daily routine,
But the thoughts float up into infinite sky-spaces

Away from the dingy, dark station, away
Into clear sunshine, into azure glory
To meet august presences, white mountainous clouds,

Sun, moon and starry host, to create strange splendour
In the bright mirror of puddles that are trodden
By stupid muddy boots on a dirty platform.

N. K. CRUIKSHANK

Divine Comedy

Presides over my changeful journey,—
Whether behind the lilacs of lips and eyes,
Dense aspen-shiver of small purposes,
Or unleaved boughs of my solitude,—
The round, full moon of that outrageous vision:
That shows: under the moss of peace,
Under our wars more transient than grass,
One iron skeleton of conflict;
Under our numerous faces' colours, shapes,
Our tongues, various like syllables of birds,
Our customs, differing, marrying like rivers,—
Two languages,
Only two races:
Only the strong, who strip themselves, accept
Weakness, exacting happiness; partake
Of tears: who kiss life's blade, and come
Into the living rose, love's kingdom;
Those; and the weak who will
Not: the weak who fail,
Who fall, who endure the terrible
Obstruction in memory for ever.

WILLIAM PORRITT

Who Insist the Rose

Who insist the rose, having no petal
to match, only the heart's rumour,
are greater than they in gardens
who watch and are sure of the message.

In us the seed and the red of the rose
from which we grow; to grow we weave
filaments round the first faint hint,
and the aspired end lies in the beginning.

We are great in fragments: to strangers
say our most memorable words.
We see in trains the passing faces—
on these and eavesdropped hints construct our dreams

Until of us little is here; the moments
most desired walk paths of sun-filled steps.
There are no means of calling all world ways
the message that would fold the leaves on stamen pain.

There is this: instinctive like the leap
cat-quick to feathered desire. This:
green leaves from cellars searching inch-wide light—
but words fall from the soft yet iron centre.

Who rumoured the rose and would
in the buried hand lie leaf, stem, petal?
Now it is dark: in us the seed
ticks measureless months to summer the promise.

DEREK STANFORD

The Statue in the Wood

Let this false light on unreal petals fade,
and let the green flame on its altar die;
let my feet turn, and let my heart repent
this lie propounded by imagination.

Yet, once again, before I hide my face
to take the trek of those who leave this wood—
eyes on the ground, seeking no sight of flowers;
desiring only absence of desire—
still let me have you, for one moment now,
beneath the branches of the apple-tree,
bracelets of frail white blossom on your arms. . . .

I will observe, briefed with farewell's perception,
locking remembrance fast in a final gaze,
the alchemy which reared this chimera.
These were the eyes. The hawk's own smouldering azure
fed their blue fire; their hot impetuous blaze
riding the seer, suddenly quenched and weak,
abashed and smiling under the lashes' shadow.
Thus ran the nose: again the hawk's fierce line;
the swoop of purpose, energy, and power—
curve of dæmonic nostrils tasting air,
drinking the salted sunlight as a wine. . . .
Mark now the mouth: blaspheming synthesis
of active passionate contours and the soft
voluptuous lips whispering the word Acceptance,
so never-to-be-believed, so undefended.

Then, in departing, let me watch you stand
with warm brown body, nipples caressed by the wind
your dancer's legs so lightly, firmly, planted
upon the earth in beauty's poised assurance.
And let me note the sunlight's benediction
upon your drunken, insolent, blond head;
how the faint breeze untidies all its fairness,
plotting to loose an avalanche of gold.

Heart may renounce, but mind shall still inherit
this chosen picture of its conjured myth;
year after year, will see the statue standing
beneath the boughs in the non-existent wood.

Mine was the mad, the sweet forbidden dream,
under the hill, of a second birth and glory;
a second recreation, second Eden,
where heart farmed only this new green despair.

JOHN BAYLISS

To a Ghost

For JULIA

If your sad hand should strike the harpsichord
for unrequited love or love turned false,
or if the darkness gathers at your word
because you would avoid your lover's curse,
then look at her who now usurps your bed,
lies still and lovely in the silence here
and know your malice cannot make afraid
the loveliness of your inheritor:

Therefore forget, and let her be your charm
to lead you out into the world of light
that you and she may triumph over harm
and turn this house from its eternal night.
But if you choose vindictiveness and lust
then shall you know your self and music dust.

MARGARET CROSLAND

Deserted Farm

A picture by Leonard Rosoman

To the bleak and automatic present tense
so tautly beaten out from brick and bone,
no past or future from such envious mouth;
mutely denied this heavy waiting hand,
leaning on sullen windows, poised for anger.

On the long broken bridgeless land
no hardening to storm, no changing rain;
something of famine crouching in dyke or door,
yet shares no want, no pity and no hate—
emptiness waits, the last inhabitant.

JAMES KIRKUP

The Last Eyes

For IAN

In this statue's marble face
two dark and liquid eyes
live, and are moved to weep
in stony orbits their eternities
of human tears, that no sleep
could dry with ordinary darkness,
nor sea-steeped sands
pile high enough to hold.
And never hands
of marble in their gloves of cold
could touch this grief away.

These eyes that nothing can escape
stare from the wet stone, a final hope.
Sight's tragic gift
that centres in them now will find
no other refuge left
when these, too, are blind.

Fire and Snow

Firelight on the glass
wheel of the light-squared window
surrounds each darkening pane
with crimson frames. Half-
mirrored in its deep
glass, half in the snow's
blue-lit garden, on the blond—
    tipped yew and snow-cockaded spruce
    the fire's tangled flames appear.

In the milk-blue snow
the starched footprints lead
to deeper whitenesses, that dream
like dim lake-vistas through
the half-dark distance of an island's
bare-place wood.
In the slow-sudden sky
    closes a last, enchanted
    opening in clouds.

The flame burns
bright on this inner
room, and on that outer
dream fixed by the tinted snow.
In the ice-fossilled hedge
the frozen thrush becomes a gold
bird singing on a flame-leafed bough,
    the tree in air
    is a bush burning.

Let not the curtains'
evil-folded weight descend!
Keep the reflection and the flame
awake all night with love, till time's
cold-breathing lawns creep up, and kill
each vision at its crimson root.
Draw then the curtains on the blackened flame,
    and on love's eyes, that with the rose must change
    behind death's cold-blinded panes.

DANNIE ABSE

Lady of black hair I see you dead in a red dress,
I bend over to kiss your face of ivory in moonlight,
I touch your ache of branches weighted with fruit.

I touch your fruit. What terrible cry is this?
You open the gangrene of birds in your breasts,
in pain of roses you open your mouth to speak.

And think, all these years you have been dead,
wonderfully silent in a red dress,
beautifully white and dead in moonlight.

I am in no way accustomed to a corpse speaking.

I cannot enter and walk through the mists,
and depart as both boy and girl, alive as a voice,
with my eyes in terror of two worlds.

I cannot follow the music out of the room,
leaving those I love, standing there, gesticulating,
and return, return as before, sane and accepted.

For I should not speak again being of two sexes,
being knowledgeable with the terror of two worlds.
I know no man who has lived in a female grave.

And think, all these years you have been dead,
wonderfully silent in a red dress,
beautifully white and dead in moonlight.

I am in no way accustomed to a corpse speaking.

ROLAND GANT

The Wedding

Because there was no moon
our young sister was married
by the light of the stars.
She walked slowly the length
of the aisle of the river,
the stones arched above her
and the windows were water
patterned with lilies and garlands
of reeds.
She walked with her bridegroom
down the nave of the sea
to the peal of the waves
and lightly-flung sand grains.
We called to her, called to her
and the echo returned to us
from the vaults of the ocean.
Because there was no moon
our young sister was married
by the light of the stars
and her heart was closed
within a light ring of coral.

T. R. GLOVER

Song

I sing the cold still morning
When cows are dummies and trees
Solidified with heavy brooding,
When only man, spinning and
Twitching, moves, from the friction
Of his devil driven dynamo.

I sing stillness and silence,
Willow and alder stillness
Over the silence of ice cold stream.
Agitation alone comes
From man and dogs, who crash through
The glass of my still, reflecting, pool.

I sing a rock, squareheaded giant
Held easily on world's back,
Heavy with flamemade granite knowledge,
Stilly majestic, quiet from
Knowing chaos beyond man's
Nightmares of atomic power let loose.

But I sing too with equal
Silent love the misted quiet
Of the smoke-downy stillness
Hung from the low industrial sky
About the high, plumed fingers
Heaven-pointing and acknowledging.

Only the Philistine gets
Across his wet unweaned mouth
My heavy, hating, boney fingers;
Only the Philistine moves
Me to violence and stops my song.

On Waterloo Bridge I sing
The stillness and silence of
London on the Thames, my favourite
Village, misted and sunlit
For me childlike to cry for
As I leave her kindness for the west.

But the west I sing for its
Stillness and silence, till the
Baying of a dog or the cursing
Of a man shatter the globe
Of devotion and harry
The scene into reluctant movement.

G. A. WAGNER

Oxford

Forehead of the morning, where men die
To make the sun shake on your spires:
City of spires, whose perennial eye
Is quick as thought among the fires
Of midnight. Moonlight casts its agony
In vain on your tranquility.

For now the holy sun perfumes the grass,
The tulip and the leaf's life in
The bud. Our pain, our southern sorrows pass
In tears of stone here where we win
The reason of your air, where we are far
From death and the event of war.

This city's character, this beauty lies
So old, so powerful, so deep,
We close the velvet rose, the music's eyes,
The sky, for here our grief should sleep:
Here is our space to dream where we can be
The captives of your victory.

IGNACE M. INGIANNI

Night Piece

When I see the battered moonlight
spot the ground beneath the crooked branches,
solid leaves, walk on it,
my shadow no bigger than a hat,
feeling a Druid's delight
in a ritual of silence, washing with cold beams
every corner of my being,
when an oak is a shawl of light,
and the waters a mirror of myths
in shivers of silver,
I say, there is no returning,
I think across a river into the path of the sky.

THE POETRY OF NICHOLAS MOORE

The tone of much of Nicholas Moore's poetry, at a first glance, seems disarming and even vapid:

Well-a-day,
The world's activity is clad in snows,
The furry ladies purr at turmoiled teas. . . .

The manner of these lines suggests, somehow, a pleasant but rather inane and affected young curate, making a deprecating remark about the situation—a situation so vaguely conceived that it may be either the war or the weather—at a Cambridge tea-party; in the last line, his mouth is full of macaroons. But somehow there is a note also of mockery, the genteel melancholy-comic Elizabethan ejaculation, the choice of the words 'activity' and 'clad', which seem, somehow, to suggest the chaste futility of language in a sermon, and in the last line, with its more straightforward Sitwellian clowning, something almost like a refined belch. The poem continues in the same mincing and dulcet accents, but it is soon apparent that the mild comedy is not really good-natured, that the furry purring is about war news in the papers, and the curate, who is perhaps a more formidable young man than he looks, observes that 'winter has a surfeit of death'. Is the young man perhaps suggesting that these nice ladies are not really nice: does he find in the warm lighted room a sterile greediness like that of the snow outside, does he find something ghoulish in the noisy newspaper patriotism of these harmless old dears? The voice is indeed mincing and dulcet; but it has also a twang, a rasp.

This, at least, is the simple language of a complicated young man, who weighs his words delicately. And the reader, too, will have to weigh Moore's words. The words—the word 'pretty', for instance, which is one of the genteel young curate's favourites—tend to have a slightly sinister trick-door feeling, as if saying to themselves, 'Pretty, pretty, aha, would you say *pretty?*' Take

It is
After all's said, only a pretty piece
Of vanity, ridiculously lovely,

where the feeling is, 'Beauty—but what is beauty but prettiness: and prettiness is petty!' an effect conveyed largely by texture, by the thin vowel in 'pretty', 'vanity', being touched petulantly off the teeth, and the same vowel being fussily cluck-clucked in 'ridiculously'. But here again we must beware of a double, perhaps a

triple mockery. The petulance and the fuss are at once playful, ironical, and sad: partly here there is again the comic moralizing curate figure of whom Moore, who has indeed a touch of this person in his own nature, makes so much use. Partly, there is the defensive irony of a shrewd person who has learned that to deprecate something one values ('the pretty piece of vanity' is the whole world of poetic beauty) is one way to protect it against clumsy criticism or coarse and damaging praise. Partly, again, there is the real sadness of the poet, realizing that in such a world as we live in 'the glass tower' of poetry is a thing of minor moment; he means what he says, though he means it with mockery and sadness. 'This is what a silly man would say about poetry, but really I find it safest to say it too, and the unfortunate thing is that there may be a great deal of truth in it.' Words, like 'pretty', that carry a stock emotional response, are generally disinfected by this sort of quizzing. Where he wants to arouse a quite uncomplicated emotion Moore often uses a word that carries no stock response: 'under the sharp *inadequate* death of war', for instance—that is moving because of its unobtrusive accuracy.

Moore uses words with a serious playfulness which recalls the Elizabethans. I cannot imagine any other contemporary English poet, for instance, composing a poem like 'The Double Yew', moving on a series of simple puns on 'you' and 'yew', nor a poem like 'O Anagrammatic History', where reading down the initial letters of each line you get: HERE LIES N. M. POET. BROTHERS GO ON, N.M. O WHAT WORLDS TO CONQUER! The grave exhortation in this poem to the reader,

Read, read between the lines and he will not fail you,

is simply a clue to this trick. Consider, too, this pun and paradox:

Colours are truths; and truths are colours, too.

We still talk about a 'colourable pretext'—the Elizabethans said, 'What colour have you for that?' meaning what pretext, or what plausible excuse. The poem from which this line comes is largely about epistemology, and by 'Colours are truths' he means, like his father in a famous refutation of idealism, that colours are real: they are not in the mind, I have not a blue perception, but a perception of blue. But, 'And truths are colours, too', means that though colours are not in the mind, propositions are: while I am doubting the reality of the world around me, I ought to be doubting the validity of my own conscious assumptions, which may be

merely specious pretexts for actions that have nothing to do with them. 'Colours seem to you shifting, evanescent, and quite subjective, but they are real: only beware lest the truths that seem real to you are as shifting, evanescent, and subjective as you suppose colours to be.'

That is tricky, and though Moore's enjoyment of words is simple and spontaneous, the movement of his mind is complicated and subtle. Truth, says Carnap, lies on the surface. That sentence might be a motto for all Cambridge philosophers, and it should not be forgotten that Moore is the son of one of the most distinguished of these—the philosopher who said, if one may summarize his ideas with misleading simplicity, that both perception and intuitions of value are windows on a real world, which the mind does not create for itself. Where many philosophies tend to draw everything into the mind, this throws everything, except a receptive capacity, out; and by subtle arguments it finally makes the world something similar to what the unphilosophic mind, in any case, has always supposed it to be. There are things which we perceive; there is a goodness which we recognize. A good deal of the strength of Nicholas Moore's poetry arises, in fact, from an acceptance of these two postulates of his father's, from an acceptance also of the corollary that there is no formula that will enable us to know what is real or what is good *in advance;* every judgment must be based upon, and about, a present experience. Such lines of Nicholas Moore's, for instance, as

> *The tall green trees are green, the real tall trees*
> *Are real. . . .*

seem to the ordinary unphilosophic reader a statement of the obvious. But to state the obvious clearly, to seek truth in the exact and trivial, rather than in the obscure and profound, is largely the point of Cambridge philosophy. A reader trained in criticism of knowledge will remember that many philosophers would say the green patchiness is green, or the green tree-like pattern is, or the green aspect (which we see) of the trees (which we do not see), and that the position here taken up by Nicholas Moore is expressed by Carnap as follows: formally, 'A red cube is on the table'; materially, 'Material things are elements of the given; a three-dimensional body is perceived as such directly and not as a series of two-dimensional projections'. It is because this, in fact, is what Moore does believe, that the objects in his poems—it is better, in his case, to speak of objects than of images—have a satisfying chunky solidity.

But what is even more important is that for this philosophy values, as well as facts, are elements of the given. They are to be arrived at by an act of recognition, not by the mechanical application of a formula, and thus Moore's poetry, in its quiet acceptance of complete individual responsibility, is in refreshing contrast with that of many modern poets who, faced with a confusing world, are running around desperately looking for a God out of a machine to make their moral judgments for them. But there is no way of assuring that all our bets come right; every horse is a new problem. It is cowardly to shift one's responsibilities on to the shoulders of a church or a political party, but, if less cowardly, it is equally futile to imagine that there is some formula that will provide, mechanically, an adequate response to every situation. Love, for instance, is not such a formula; if we try to make it so, we cheapen the idea of love. 'We must love one another or die', says Auden. 'Love is not strong to fight with history', says Alex Comfort. But if we take love as meaning the feeling that arises in a prolonged and happy personal relationship, the feeling that we have for our lovers and friends, it is cheating with the sense of the word to say that we can love everybody; the real moral problem is that of treating people decently, though we cannot love them in this way. If, on the other hand, we take love in the widest possible sense, as meaning any emotional surge of desire or approval, then there *is* no other motive in history; the glutton loves his food, the sadist loves his victims, the German people loved Hitler, the traitor loves himself—and, as Dante saw, the problem is not that there is no love, but that men's love can be excessive in some directions, inadequate in others, that it can be misdirected and ill-balanced.

The valid state for man is a state of hope; the dangerous states are despair and presumption. In seeking fool-proof formulas, poets tend to escape from a state of despair into a state of presumption. A real faith in life is a state somewhere between despair and presumption, and a tricky thing to manage, for while it is desperate to feel that one has not such a faith, it is presumptuous to assume that one has. The presumptuous faith, as Moore sees, is not properly a faith at all:

> *Or a ruler who led his people into war, knowing*
> *It a good cause for which they fought,*
> *Yet this faith which is hard and certain*
> *Is too pliable, and is not . . .*

One can see how a hard and certain faith becomes too pliable,

for instance, when political idealists, who first took their stand because of a hatred of oppression and cruelty, begin to condone oppressions and cruelties which benefit their own side; or in such minor matters as the literary censorship in Eire, where people are desperately afraid that they might read something which would prove that what they have a hard and certain faith in is just not true. Of the real faith, the faith that is neither hard and certain, nor disgustingly pliable, Moore says:

but a child or a girl or a lover
Through some act of kindness or inconsistency
Gives faith its true colour.

That is (roughly): faith is the courage of simple people who take experience as it comes and do what they feel at the moment they ought to do, whether or not that fits in with their preconceived ideas. No doubt we must all accept certain patterns, certain conventions, certain provisional schemes; but faith, our adequate response to the actual, is most in evidence at the moments when we feel driven to revise these; in a sense, faith is the opposite of formula.

Moore appears a simple poet because he deals with objects, as a child with bricks; a fantastic poet, because these objects are often sharply isolated from the contexts in which we find them in life—he might be described as a poet of bright things against a background of white paper or blue sky—and because they are often arranged rather as objects are arranged in a tasteful shop window, or on a child's nursery floor, than as they are arranged in country landscapes or city streets. He might also appear a childish poet because he is still strongly attracted and interested by many things, such as bright colours, sweets, monkeys, unicorns, birds, small ponds, historical characters, words taken in their individuality, that also fascinate children; and the view of the world as consisting of definite objects without a defined background is largely a child's view. But even when dealing with apparently simple material, he can be a good deal more subtle than he looks. Consider this passage:

The second was a white gull, snowy white,
As white and clean as snow, without a blot
Of any other colour: beak and eye
Were lemon yellow, shone beside the plumes
Of brilliant white with a peculiar brilliance. . . .

That is a startlingly exact analysis of the stages by which a pattern

of perception becomes more inclusive. We notice a white gull. It is as white as snow. But not only as white, but as clean. (Three images, getting sharper.) There is not a spot of any other colour, in fact. (Provisional, merely provisional, closing of the pattern.) But no: its beak and eye, of course, are yellow, and they shine most brilliantly, especially in relation to the whiteness (but the whiteness is brilliance in itself, and this brilliance of the yellow, set against the brilliance of the whiteness, has its own odd and special quality). Language keeps pace here, step by step, with the shifts towards a more complete perception; what is interesting to note is how the repetitions which this makes necessary—'white' and 'white', 'brilliant' and 'brilliance'—justify themselves also as an imitative verbal pattern, like the successive shining appearances, as it dives and twists through the sky, of the same bird. With such bright strange creatures as these 'five peculiar gulls', completely and cleanly detached from any background but the formal and empty background of the sky, Moore deals particularly lovingly. But he is not a nature poet, and such creatures are always brought in as examples of something—in this stanza as an example of how anything at all in motion is perceived.

Moore is, according to his own notion of the tradition in English poetry, a traditional writer. His notion is not unlike that expressed by Cleanth Brookes in 'Modern Poetry and the Tradition', except that he has not been much influenced by the Metaphysicals; he has not the zest of Donne, or of Mr. Empson to-day, in connecting discrepant pieces of general information, and he has not much interest in either the Christian or the Platonic heritage. The tradition, for him, starts with Langland (Chaucer he regards as mainly reflecting French and Italian influences), rises and declines with the Elizabethan and Jacobean drama, and, apart from the fragmentary exception of Blake, only starts again with American writers like John Peale Bishop, Wallace Stevens, John Crowe Ransome, Allen Tate, and Conrad Aiken. (The only English poet, alive to-day, of an older generation, whom I can think of as possibly traditional in Moore's sense is Robert Graves; in Mr. Eliot, he is interested chiefly in qualities that are also those of the American poets I have mentioned—not in Mr. Eliot's separate qualities, nor in the special version of an English tradition which Mr. Eliot has created for himself. One of the limitations of Moore's taste is probably an instinctive repugnance to most uses of religious themes in poetry. 'Like all mystics', he once wrote to me—I forget about whom—'e.g., even Yeats, he has no taste and no discrimination.' And he

once remarked to me that mystical experience was something which, even and perhaps especially if it started happening to him personally, he would continue to regard with profound distrust.) His idea of the English tradition is, in short, that of something national, popular, but also learned. It has to do with the availability of symbols that will make their appeal to the whole of a given society, not merely, like Pope's, to the polite world, nor, like Tennyson's, to the literary middle-classes. For a traditional poet, in his sense, it is more important that a society should be *alive* than that it should be *well-intentioned;* it is to the artist, not the moralist, in Moore, that America appeals, and the American poets he likes best, especially those of the South like Ransome and Tate, hold political views which, perhaps, merely as a moralist, he would regard as wrong and reactionary. But it is not from good intentions that a society derives its style, or a writer his talents, and where questions of cultural vitality are concerned 'it is too weak', as Mr. Empson says, 'to speak of right and wrong'.

Because of these ideas, Moore tries to use the whole language, to write out of the tradition, and not merely out of his own personality. That, rather, is the glass through which a wider world is seen—but how far a distorting glass? He accepts the world, the romance as romance, the fact as fact. When he describes the English kings, who harry and oppress, as noble, and Lear's daughters, who are jealous bitches, as also being romantic swans, he is giving romance that validity it legitimately has: a romantic validity. To elaborate one of his own child-like metaphors, romance is the smooth chocolate surface, and underneath is the elegiac nougat that must be chewed ruminatively and sadly—'the gay spread like a powder over the sad'. His art is careful, though copious. Mr. Spender, in 1942, described him as a careless writer, with thumping, monotonous rhythms; another reviewer in 'Horizon' has spoken of him as issuing a series of bouncing bad cheques. But if such a romantic passage as this is either careless and monotonous, or false and inflated:

> *No, darling, I will need no monument,*
> *No other monument than you can give,*
> *Your love. With that I shall be more content*
> *Than others can be, lying in the grave . . .*

then so are the quatrains of any Elizabethan sonnet. There are certain obvious cadences into which traditional English verse does tend to fall, and traditional writers in English have always regarded

the general rule for verse as an easy and formal cadence, not a contorted emphasis; Moore's chief 'modern' metrical trick is an occasional deliberate breaking of the back of the line—as in the last line of the sonnet from which the above quatrain is taken—when he feels that a gentle lulling motion will be too mechanical; another trick is a deliberate stiffness and pomposity of movement when he is expressing sentiments which are not his own, but which are, he feels, all too probably those of the foolish reader:

Bomb for bomb, strength for strength, anger for
Anger, we must heap hate upon our foe,
Careful now of the peaceful man our neighbour,
Suspicious of his unknown searching eyes;
For who can search for peace within a war
And not destroy our courage in his labour?

This is not straightforward satire. It is a flat statement of common human sentiments, not shared by the poet; and not directly criticising the feelings (for men have little control over their feelings, though much over their intentions), he asks, 'What will the consequences be?'

Here we are. My love, my love, what is this
Rattling and waging war within the heart?
What powerful astrology has hurt
The child who did not question, who obeyed
The certain ways of hate? O stars, O stars,
Whatever falls, befalls.

Whatever falls, befalls. 'Things and men's actions are what they are, and their consequences will be what they will be; and why should we wish to be deceived?' There is nothing weakly romantic or inflated about that, or about any of the moral questions which Moore feels compelled to ask:

Are we to make a mock of mercy and
Forgive no-one—the penalty of lust?

Our answers to that question, too, have practical consequences. Though he has the æsthetic innocence of a child, Moore is a singularly adult moralist.

G. S. Fraser

Art, we may say, is the integrated product of man's conflicting and disunited being; the apology offered to the idea of wholeness by the sick, self-healing, aspirant mind. Again—to express it in another fashion—art is a form of the wish-fulfilment dream subject to criticism by the laws of necessity and possibility; or, as Herbert Read has remarked, the amalgam of reason and imagination.

This original flaw or schism in man's make-up (the outcome, thinks Berdyaev, of consciousness effecting a sense of segregation between the human and the natural worlds) it has largely been the business of thought to disguise, to minimize or mitigate. So it comes about that the mediæval thinkers had tried to preserve man's image intact, to conceive of his being in rounded terms, as a coherent entity. 'The most deep-seated characteristic of the Cartesian reform', writes M. Jacques Maritain in his book, 'The Dream of Descartes',* 'is more than anything else, in my opinion, one of disjunction and rupture. St. Thomas brings together, Descartes cleaves and separates, and this in the most violently dogmatic way.'

Father of the philosophic split-personality, Descartes—a scientist among the metaphysicians—destroyed the idea of human individual one-ness as physicists were later to split the atom. By this cataclysm, body and mind were divorced as interdependent categories, and philosophy has been trying to reunite these divided partners ever since. According to Descartes, the mind—as seat of reason—possessed the faculty of free-will, whilst the body—as a mechanistic structure—was subject to determinism. In order to explain the parallel existence of these two disparate elements, Descartes had resort to a *deus ex machina*, and envisaged an act of heavenly synchronization.

What, however, concerns us here is the effect which Cartesian thought exerted within the realm of French art and æsthetics in the period of academic classicism.

In a profound essay on this thinker, Herbert Read speaks of 'the non-poetic nature of Descartes' philosophy', four aspects of which may be briefly termed the anti-sensuous, the anti-affective, the hyper-rational, and the rigidly uniform.

Now one of the characteristics of art is what we may call the plastic and conscious incarnation of the senses; but, as M. Maritain remarks, Descartes—who practised a preparatory discipline before

* PL Editions, 7s. 6d. net.

thinking: closing his eyes, stopping up his ears, and altogether shutting off his senses—attempted to reach the plane of intellect 'without passing through the gates of the senses, the way fixed for us by nature'. The second denial of the æsthetic process is implicit in Descartes' anti-affective bias; for, as the psychology of Freud has made plain, the erotic, the creative, and the lyrical urge are all closely bound up with one another. The third negation of eidetic thinking (the designating trait of the artistic mind) is Descartes' sovereign passion for reason; for reason in the raw, as one might say. Feeling thus becomes, M. Maritain has shown, 'no longer anything more than a confused idea'; and so we get a rationalistic art based on 'the intellectualism of the imagination'. 'We know the effects', M. Maritain continues, 'of the triumph of dualism in the second half of the seventeenth century: a theoretical contempt of the body and the senses; nothing worthwhile but pure thought. That means, in fact, the triumph of artificial thought and of false intellectualism; for human intellection is living and fresh only when it is centred upon the vigilance of sense perception. The natural roots of our knowledge being cut, a general drying-up in philosophy and culture resulted, a drought for which romantic tears were later to provide only an insufficient remedy.' Art, we may well characterize as 'the science of mysteries' (a term which M. Maritain applies to theology). This science—conceived of either as theology or art—Descartes eliminated, recognizing only in its place a science of knowables—a positive science. Thus was sown the philosophic seeds of crude realism in art and letters; an æsthetic which could see no farther than its nose—a copyist's æsthetic of the 'hard, plain fact'.

The fourth and final opposition inherent in Descartes to an unconstricted art was what one may call a unitary passion—his monopolist's impulse to see all things in a self-created orthodox and uniform light. This is how M. Maritain describes his absolutist obsession—this philosophic egoism compounded of mental avarice and pride. 'One single science—which logically implies a single and identical degree of abstraction and intelligibility for everything that we can know. All the disciplines of the intellect henceforth are to be stretched out upon a same level of intelligibility, they will depend essentially upon the same light, they will require necessarily the same kind of certitude, they will of necessity make use of the same method, varied in its application, one in its essence: the *scientific method*, that keen, levelling sovereign, refuge and comforter, that has made such headway since the "Discourse".'

Now art delights in the miscellaneous: the myriad, rainbow-tinted, heterogeneous world; and the 'Uniformitarianism' of eighteenth century thinking—as Arthur Lovejoy has characterised it—is foreign and repellent to its pluralistic nature, and largely explains 'why no great art has prevailed during the domination of the Cartesian spirit'. This 'monochrome reproduction' art is, as Professor Whitehead observed, the art of the intellectual Puritan; and yet another critic, Herbert Read, points out, 'reached similar conclusions, drawing a parallel between the ideas of Descartes and the paintings of Poussin, the drama of Corneille, and the architecture of the age of Richelieu. All knowledge becomes an invention, an experimental discovery, and all invention a structure of some kind. Poussin's landscapes are 'fabrications', vast assemblages of stage machinery; Corneille's plays are symmetrical arrangements of artificial elements, and even the most moving scenes in his tragedies are draped on the obvious framework of a system.'

Descartes' disservice to the cause of art was therefore a twofold affair: firstly, the establishment of a philosophic method or mode of thinking contrary to æsthetic behaviour; and, secondly, the split in the mind of the artist, due to Descartes' partitioning of man as a divided being, a dual creature of reason and sense. From this philosophic arbitrary divorce the hostile schools of romanticism and classicism were largely to spring; and since that time the field of art offers a tragically rich succession of great creative schizophrenes.

One of the greatest of these was Baudelaire, in whom this internal antithesis, along with other causes, precipitated madness. Having laid waste his physical existence by early sensual abandonment, the poet made a bid to redeem his life by imposing on his memories the regimen of art. Arriving in the wake of romantic verse, Baudelaire, with his morality of form, gave rise to a new concept of writing as æsthetic penance or purification. Hitherto, the Grand Siècle poets thought of their art as a social practice—a rational enlightenment in pleasurable form. Following them, the Romantic generation regarded poetry as personal confession; a free orchestration of *le cri de coeur*. Baudelaire, combining the chief traits of both—the formal observance and individual passion inaugurated a new æsthetic era—the epoch of the literary fakir or saint. Under this merciless dispensation the artist no longer considered his art in terms of social communication or audacious self-expression. Instead, it was seen as self-castigation; a scrupulous ascesis for the creative mind. ('The man is nothing, the work is everything', wrote Flaubert—a secular St. Anthony of art.)

This stringent theory of discipline was the means by which Baudelaire strove to transcend the inner conflict of mind and body; the continual tug-of-war between reason and the senses (the deadly twins of Descartes' thought). Inwardly divided as he was, Baudelaire conceived of the outside world in unrelenting dual terms. So he discovered in art and nature an irreconciliable Jekyl and Hyde. 'Badness exists without effort quite naturally', he observes in his 'Praise of Maquillage'—one of the thirteen sub-divisions of his work, 'The Painter of Modern Life'—'goodness is always produced artificially; and all that I can remark of nature as a bad councillor in moral matters may perhaps be applied to the study of beauty'.

This unrelieved antithetical thinking—this vision of the world in black and white, seen as a body of total contradictions—sharpened the poet's own already perverse mind. Thus woman, by nature less rational than man, instead of being viewed as his complement, must suffer the heightening of her difference until she becomes an erotic idol, a pleasure machine, a deified slut. Even here, woman was not to be enjoyed on the carnally simple level of being, but exploited as a reservoir of rare sensations; a starting-point for the poetic mind. So we get a poetry of fetishism; a 'still-life' worship of the living flesh, in which one aspect of the harem-goddess becomes unnaturally emphasized. As a person the woman has been eliminated. All that remains are her discrete charms; and in one of his prose poems he writes:

'In the glowing fire-grate of your hair I inhale the odour of tobacco mingled with opium and sugar; in the night of your hair I see the infinity of tropical azure resplendent; on the downed banks of your hair I inebriate myself with the mingled odours of tar, of music and of coconut oil.

'Long let me bite your heavy, black tresses. When I gnaw your elastic and rebellious hair, it seems to me that I am eating memories.'

Another aspect of Baudelaire's dualism was the way in which the poet, inwardly divided, felt himself likewise divided from the world. Just as Descartes erected a partition between mind and body in the individual, so the philosopher Leibniz, in his turn, by means of the doctrine of 'windowless' monads' segregated man from man. This outward or collective application of Descartes by the German thinker has its counterpart in Baudelaire's hermetic cult. ('Baudelaire is the modern hero who inhabits solitude', writes Wallace Fowlie in his book, 'The Spirit of France', while Arthur Symons long ago described him as 'a hermit of the brothel'.) 'I had a curious sentiment of solitude', Baudelaire observes in his 'Confession', 'from my very

youth, despite my family, despite the fact that I was always alone, always myself, even in the company of boys of my own age.'

To offset this isolation, Baudelaire was driven to seek out crowds, 'to take a bath in the multitude', to lose himself in the mêlée of the street. From this need much of his noctambular art—a new species almost of poetry—was born. Æsthetically productive as this contact was, it failed to create that relationship with the human world which the poet sought in vain (see his prose poem, 'The Eyes of the Poor'). As ever with Baudelaire, this contact with life was pursued in a wild, exasperated manner. All of his relationships were little more than orgies; attempts to storm the realm of 'other-ness' by rape. So, as Arthur Symons said, 'he lived and died solitary'; a Manichean poet of that disunited world that the thought of Descartes helped to create.

Whereas Baudelaire's aversion to mankind sprang from his obsessive early love for his mother, Rimbaud's universal vendetta arose from a similar youthful hatred. 'He condemned and cursed', writes Wallace Fowlie, 'the affectionate part of his nature in a voluntary exercise of schizophrenia. He denied his purity in order to bear living with his mother.'

Along this psychological warpath Rimbaud ventured farther than Baudelaire; for where the latter poet repudiated the values of the age in which he lived, the former denied the values of the past, turning his back with contempt upon tradition. Confronted with the democratic thought of his day, Baudelaire might well play the savage critic, but face to face with a great work of art he acknowledged the glories of humanism. Of this æsthetic amateur tinge there was not the slightest trace in Rimbaud ('I am not of the world,' 'I belong to an inferior race,' 'I am a negro, a beast', he wrote in that bible of arson, 'A Season in Hell'.)

'The essential violence in Rimbaud's nature', writes Wallace Fowlie, 'always prevented him from becoming a bohemian. No laziness was in him, no useless and flaccid posing.' All his audacious 'shocking' compositions were something much more than inspired leg-pulling, something much more than those gibes at the bourgeois in Schumann's Latin-quarter ballet, 'Carnival'. His work constitutes a burning of the books, a firing of the vineyards of European letters, a kind of heretical *auto-da-fé*. Styling himself a 'voyou' or blackguard, Rimbaud pursued his anti-philistine course with a wholehearted fervid earnestness of purpose, acting the cad on principle.

So, in his endeavour to supersede the bourgeois limits of understanding, he went beyond logic and normal sense-perception,

creating thereby the art of hallucination and laying the basis of subconscious reason (the logic of delirium or the dream).

Pioneer as he was in the realm of modern letters, it was left to others to develop his gains. Rapidly tiring of his path-finder rôle, he made the typical modern man's choice, and renounced the world of art to seek material riches. ('One must needs be absolutely modern', he wrote.)

This betrayal of his visionary task—largely the product of disgust with Verlaine—clearly had its source in his own split nature, his divided conception of the function of art. The mind of Rimbaud was an arena in which the idea of pure poetry and the idea of poetry as a means to power or an instrument of change fought to the death.

In the first essay written in this country upon him, Rimbaud is introduced by George Moore as a 'Marlowe of 1870'; and poet of the dream of power as he was, this youthful apprentice-vagabond Faust is here perhaps presented in the likeliest terms. With his occult reading, his study of the Cabbala, his interest in Illuminist doctrine, Rimbaud appears as a Paracelsus manqué; an alchemist poet in a scientific age. Combining a vast material ambition along with imaginative legerdemain, he might have succeeded in an earlier epoch as a second Cagliostro or virtuoso quack. As it was, a new superstition outdid him, to which he, in turn, paid homage in the end. 'Science, the new noble knowledge, and progress! The world is on the march to-day all right.' So he wrote with scorn in his dæmonic testament before setting sail to profit by these aims. The schizophrene poet gave place to the trader, and neither of these functions satisfied the man.

Since the time of Rimbaud the story of French verse has been one long struggle to reconcile the mind and the body, reason and the senses, the private universe and the outside world. This synthesis the surrealists pursued by a kind of subconscious dialectic in which reality and the dream were first equated and then confused. For all the irrational pyrotechnic splendour which this inversion of 'common sense' produced, the lack of a validly unified vision was apparent in most of the work of the school. 'Poetic objectivity', wrote Paul Eluard—thereby admitting the limits of his art—'only exists in the succession, the linking together of all the subjective elements of which the poet, until the beginning of the new order, is not the master but the slave.' Poetry, in other words, was still the phantom field of personal inner conflict.

One of the first to overcome this impasse—to find a way out of the hushed and padded room (the sound-proof cell which poetry

had become)—and speak with a clear public voice was Aragon. Snatched away by war from the intellectual life and the doctrinaire distraction of Left Wing letters, his thoughts were focused on his far-away wife, and out of these memories arose his first poems. Later, when the fall of France occurred, he made a new music out of his despair; and in his verses he came to identify the love for his country with that for his wife:

Landscape or woman, sleep-charmer, strong as wine,
Truly I knew not which I paint, which love;
Nor if these golden thighs or breasts may prove
To be the westering pinewoods of Bretagne.

In rediscovering his country, Aragon was led to discover himself: to regain the image, so long forgotten, of man as a creature of local affections, suckled by tradition; a regional being. Again, it is easier to sympathize with—to idealize, even—a defeated culture than with one which prospers and, in every sense, grows fat. In the former case, one's thought is focused upon a fundamental spiritual ethos, and ignores those excrescences of profit and power.

From this arises the paradox that while the liberal poets of defiant Britain continued to write as impersonal critics, the Communist poet of invaded France was able to sing of his country like a lover. Such, however, is the incidence of history upon the plane of art and letters that to draw from this contrast odious comparisons, in the manner of Connolly, is unwise and unfair. Neither did the course of later French affairs succeed in holding the poet's attention, for after the phases of defeat and resistance his poetry retreated from the present scene. The object now of his passionate vision became the world of mediæval France. His patriotic voice lost its social inflexion, and in place of the poet as minstrel-maquis there appears the imaginative student of history in love with the chronicles and legends of his land.

In conclusion, we may say that the poet to-day is still a being of conflicting urges; a 'displaced person', whether with regard to the micro- or macro-cosmic world. Nor does there seem to be much likelihood of the poet achieving a more united speech until a common economy and culture draws men together in a more vital way. Until that time, for which we must prepare, our thanks are due to those brave French figures who explored the negative and positive zones of socially quarantined Schizoid Man.

DEREK STANFORD

REVIEWS

Poems from Giacomò Leopardi, translated and introduced by JOHN HEATH-STUBBS (John Lehmann Limited, 7s. 6d.).

KATHLEEN RAINE, *Living in Time*, (Editions Poetry, London, 6s.).

Count Giacomo Leopardi could have been that type of a country gentleman who figures pleasingly in all ages, learned and rustic, assuring the world around him that all is not yet lost, since manners still depended on wisdom and continual contact with simple things. But Leopardi was a tortured soul. He could take nothing for granted. A large part of his life was spent in Recanati, his home-town, though he loathed the vulgarity of the people whom he saw inhabit the once sacred land.

> *. . . for unrevealed*
> *The quiver-bearing goddess*
> *Went down to the warm flood, to cleanse away*
> *After the bloodstained hunt, immodest dust*
> *From off her snowy flank and virgin arms.*

The old gods and the white nymphs had disappeared, and what beauty could still be seen was also destined to go down with a setting moon.

It is in the tradition of Italian love-poetry when he calls dead Sylvia and dead Nerina with his mournful longing. Such sentiments alone would not have made an exceptional poet of Leopardi, but he was possessed of an immense intellectual curiosity and of an ever-alert and thrilled imagination. Trying to escape Recanati he went to Rome. But he soon realized that the ancient city as much as probably any other capital in the world shared the same stifling atmosphere with provincial Recanati. Boredom, like a thick veil, hid the heavens from the eyes of men. A boredom which then only began to thicken and which fully descended upon the cities of men only a century later. Leopardi tore the veil aside. But he found no sun. He gazed at a deep dark sky and he sang his 'Night Song':

> *What are you doing in Heaven? O Moon, tell me,*
> *What, O silent Moon?*

One must read this song both in the original and the translation to believe its beauty. What mattered to Leopardi was that by discovering *la luna* he established a contact between himself and the world unknown to men. When he understood the secret message

of this revelation he knew that night had fallen upon men and that the moon too would set.

Thus he became preoccupied with the coming end of the world. He once had a dream-vision of the moon crashing into a field 'big as a water-pot', and tells it in a rustic dialogue surprisingly reminiscent of Robert Frost. There is indeed much in common between Leopardi and Frost.

The storm has passed away;
I hear the birds rejoice, the barn-door hen,
Gone back into the lane,
Reiterate her call.

These lines could be by either of these two poets as they stand in their English version, but one might not recognize the affinity as easily from the Italian original:

Passata è la tempesta:
Odo augelli far festa, e la gallina,
Tornata in su la via,
Che ripete il suo vreso.

One might also frequently think of Lorca and be startled how well Leopardi could pass as a poet in this century.

Among his contemporaries there was the Austro-Hungarian poet Nikolaus von Lenau, who conveys Leopardi's moods and often his sombre visions. Hölderlin, when he describes the impending chaos, is a spiritual brother of Leopardi, as is being pointed out by Heath-Stubbs in his introduction to this volume.

What makes Leopardi such a supreme master of nineteenth century elegaic verse is not that he forced upon himself a 'classical restraint'—what appears as 'restraint' is a very peculiar form of *Abgeklärtheit*—but the main argument for Leopardi's uniqueness is in the fact that he stood midway between a passing baroque and modern Expressionism.

For the present version of Leopardi's verse by the poet John Heath-Stubbs it should be said that one does not miss the Italian original, since he succeeds in making the reader accept his transversed rendering. One is impressed by the elegant mastery of English which one has come to associate with this poet.

The remarkable position of Kathleen Raine as a woman poet lies mainly in the fact that she has realized what is the true tradition of English poetry, and that she has made herself a part of the revival of that tradition which is taking place in our time. *Stone and Flower*, her first published collection of

poems, made this clear to the attentive reader, but since her new collection was published there can be no doubt left as to her intentions in that respect. The atmosphere in which her thoughts move as if they belonged there is the mental and spiritual climate of Donne, Blake and Hopkins, though this may not be too easily discerned by manifestations of an obvious technical method, but rather by her attitude towards the external, the common ground of sorrow and passion, and the internal, the symbol. One feels continually her fascination with the baroque magnificence of the Catholic liturgy and mysteries, and how typically in the great English manner this fascination blends with the stern and restrained humility, the somewhat snobbish humility, of the Puritan heritage. Of the latter there is more in this poet than she would perhaps care to admit.

Her poems often give the impression of cool control, suggesting sharp clear glass, and also of a desire for the adventurous and daring ways of man's truthful speculations. Thus, the poet shares a passionate longing for reality which has so much enriched the poets I have mentioned in connection with her work. One is grateful that she is not shy of the heretic, the salt of the Church, knowing full well that it is not heresy but blasphemy which is cursed and abandoned by the divine inspiration.

In spite of all that my lines would suggest, Miss Raine is not a philosophical poet. Her problem is poetic and she weaves her lines between the two extreme poles of Catholic exaltation and Puritan restraint. It is when she escapes from both that she writes her best poetry. Her escapades end—one feels with what exalted relief—in paganism, as in her poem 'Mourning in Spring' and in her perfectly wonderful 'Goddess':

> *Some worship her as queen of angels, Venus of the sea,*
> *House of gold, palace of ivory,*
> *Gate of heaven and rose of mystery,*
> *Inviolate and ever-virgin earth,*
> *Daughter of time and mother of eternity.*

How near true Christianity is to the pagan, these poems show, but how much farther even from the sham morality, the sham sermons of those who kill with one hand and collect charity with the other this realization must imply. It is altogether remarkable how near true poetry is to both Christianity and paganism, and how this fact is doubly accentuated in our time. I am glad that this is so, and glad to think that this poet and her new collection desire to bear witness that this spirit of resurrection from the curse of history is alive in us and shines.

FRED MARNAU

The Collected Poems of Herbert Read (Faber, 8s. 6d.).

Most of the work in this book is new to me—written before I was born, or before I took any interest in poetry. Seeing Read's poems as a whole for the first time, I cannot attempt to assess them apart from the man, or apart from his other published work. Read has had an almost unequalled influence on artistic thought in his time, and this influence has not yet reached its full force, but it has been his thought, consistently, rather than his artistic and creative work which has formed that influence. The experiential material of 'Annals of Innocence and Experience' and Read's critical work are a parallel comment on the poetry, and much of the matter has been attempted twice and worked out twice, once as narrative and idea, once as poetry. This is not common in published literature, since the temptation to suppress one or other version is very nearly irresistible. Consider *Liedholz* in this book and the prose treatment of the same incident in 'The Raid': up to a point the strength of the second subtracts something from the poem. It would be possible to charge Read with having deliberately sacrificed his poetry to his ideas, though from his attitude to creation in general he would hardly have done so deliberately. But that view applies to a part only of the poetry. It takes a good deal of candour to publish poems which are genuinely collected, not selected, and the weakest poems, which suffer either from this attempt to re-realize experience which has spent itself elsewhere, or from being sketches for something not yet fully realized, serve to give a measure of how far poetry is Read's natural mode of expression. I doubt if it is, since in spite of the intensity of his experience, which is often visual rather than verbal, it is the poetry of ideas in this book which makes the deepest mark, exactly as it is with Eliot, though for different reasons, largely their extreme directness and lucidity, against Eliot's ambiguity and compression, that and the poetry of humanity. Read's humanism is something radical, the real root both of his ideas and of his best creative writing. It is a sense of humanity as a biological state, as well as a source of ethical ideas, which Eliot lacks and Lorca and Eluard among modern poets of magnitude are almost alone in possessing. Shelley must be the only English lyrist who combined it with a major poetic voice and with Read's intellectual clarity, but Read has only this blend of mind and vision in common with the Shelleyan tradition. He studiously avoids grandiloquent writing about Man and Freedom—he has learned too much from Blake. Both Innocence and Experience militate against any attempt to write *vers majeurs*.

Accordingly the significant part of the collection revolves round two things—Read's sense of humanity, and his power of relating intellect with sheer sensory pleasure in simple symbols. I get the impression that he writes with difficulty, his vision of the finished work going ahead of his technique and to some extent preventing him from criticising himself. In the end, the book revolves round two poems, 'The End of a War' and '1945', an early and a late poem which manage between them to catch and hold all the potentialities of Read's approach to his material. They strike me as poems for which all his other writing in this collection was preparatory or an afterthought.

I only employ these personal comparisons because it is hopeless to consider Read apart from the tradition he stands in. He was and is much influenced by Wordsworth, rather as Bridges was influenced, and there is something of a common outlook which he shares with Bridges, even in points of technique, and a tendency to be left speechless by the intensity of his own pleasure in experience which takes the form of poeticism—not the result of failing to see and supplying phrases from stock, but of finding no phrase which is adequate, and falling back on the common saying in the consciousness of what it means to the writer himself. There is much of Wordsworth's approach to poetry (not his ideology or his technique) in 'The Third', for instance, but Read gives it a mental and intellectual dignity which make it interesting to compare this poem with the dozens on the same theme which other people have written.

Yet another source of the character of Read's poetic diction is his determination to make his experience genuinely and clearly common to the other man. He is consistent to his principle that art is a natural activity in which everyone should be able to share, and which everyone in a sane society would practise in his ordinary living. It would be extremely easy for a poet who was a scholar and a student of abstract art to write entirely for his intellectual equals; Read says:

I would have my own vision
The world's vision:
the beauty settled in my mind
a lamp in a busy street.

That particular poem wrestles explicitly and painfully with the difficulty of such an approach, limited by a tradition of 'poetry', by the language, by the fact that much as Read desires to see all men his equals, they are not, and he has to drag them to his own

level. No poetry, not even popular poetry, achieves a full equality of man—the poet always, by virtue of his aptitude, must precede even when he has the sense to refuse leadership of the political kind.

I found in this book that the known poems, 'The End of a War', 'Cranach', 'The Contrary Experience', 'Ode', 'A Northern Legion', and the last poem, '1945', are connected, supplemented, but not superseded by the other work; but from the presence of the other work they gain enormously in coherence. When a poet reaches acceptance this connecting structure tends to be lost sight of, and the relation between his best works is blurred. In the continuous train of comment which Read has maintained ever since he began to write, each landmark, the 1914 war, Spain, the personal crises which go with maturity, has produced its own monument in one poem at least which remains unforgettable. Two of the chief marks of integrity and poetic soundness are the ability to react early, before the rest, to a situation which affects man, and the consistent power to react rightly. Now that everyone who *is* a man, not a disguised quadruped, sees 1914 or Spain much as Read saw them at the time, and is beginning to see Liberation as he saw it, it is uncommonly easy to lose sight of the achievement behind the maintenance of this undeflected and unbamboozled humanity which has never once played Read false. At the present Read himself, his ideas, his poems, his vigour and freshness of perception, and the fact that directly or indirectly he has written a high proportion of the work of the 'younger' poets of two or three generations, whether they admit it or not, are the truest measure of what he has done. The achievement which he himself would probably regard as his most satisfying is to have written poems which nobody but the avowed opponents of humanness and human self-realization will wish to abuse. He has united traditionalism with a keen appreciation of new movements, without maltreating tradition or archaising modern diction. I dislike the overworked word 'organic' in criticism, but it seems to me to convey this natural growth. There is a historical durability in work of this kind which time only serves to emphasize.

Reason and Love
incurved like a prow
a blade dividing
Time's contrary flow

Poetry a pennon
rippling above
in the fabulous wind.

ALEX COMFORT

STEPHEN SPENDER, *Poems of Dedication* (Faber & Faber, 6s.); E. J. SCOVELL, *Midsummer Meadow* (Routledge, 5s.); JOHN WALLER, *The Merry Ghosts* (Poetry London, 6s.).

Poems of Dedication is Mr. Spender's first book for five years. It is divided into four sections: the first, a series of six poems which form an elegy, are poems that commemorate and mourn a death; the second consists of seven love poems, and the fourth of three poems of seascape and landscape. The third, and to my mind the least successful section is a group of poems, 'Spiritual Explorations', which appeared in *New Writing and Daylight* some two years ago. This is not, we are told, the sum of Mr. Spender's work during these years, but a selection which contains a unity of its own. It is, at any rate, a convenient time to gauge Mr. Spender's development.

What then are the main things that strike one about this new book? Firstly, it is at once far less topical and more personal in nature than anything Mr. Spender has previously written. By that I mean that each poem reveals a point of departure that comes almost entirely from within, as opposed to the either personal or world catastrophes that have been the starting point of Mr. Spender's earlier poems. Of the first section, obviously enough, this is far less true than of the others. These poems, almost frightening in their nakedness of emotion and in the passion of their loss, reveal the true aspects of Mr. Spender's struggle with technique. They contain some of the slightly blurred outline and almost lyrical urgency of his first and best book, and at the same time show the inadequacies which result from an attempt to reconcile a superimposed formality of technique that is in conflict with his particular genius. This causes an occasional badly-forced pressure of rhyme, evident in such lines as:

Here lamp and wooden furniture are gracious
All other times and places seem atrocious.

The love poems in this volume are of a singular and delicate grace, unparalleled in contemporary poetry. They have a sensuousness, a lyric fusion of imagination and feeling, and a fragility that make them seem almost echoes of poems, rather than poems themselves:

He laid his head, weighed with a thought
On the sleep of her lips. Thus, locked
Within the lens of their embrace
They watched the life their lives had wrought

The folded future active street
With walls of flesh and crowning face,
within her flesh complete,
Between their clinging bodies rocked.

The final section contains one poem, 'Seascape', about which Mr. Spender has written revealingly in an article printed in *Partisan Review*, 'The Making of a Poem'. It shows to the full the care and revision which are necessary before Mr. Spender achieves his most beautiful effects. Its first verse gives some idea of his capabilities at their best:

There are some days the happy ocean lies
Like an unfingered harp, below the land.
Afternoon gilds all the silent wires
Into a burning music of the eyes.
On mirroring paths between those fine-strung fires
The shore, laden with roses, horses, spires,
Wanders in water, imaged above ribbed sand.

'Spiritual Explorations' are philosophic in intent and less lyric in conception. The rhyme scheme employed again demonstrates that, with it, the compactness that should be gained is too often at the expense of the fluid line that is Mr. Spender's own unique gift.

For five years' work this book is very slight in quantity, although it is not in itself a complete record. It has weaknesses, particularly in the first and third section, yet the purity and the quality of some of the shorter poems convince that, wherever Mr. Spender's momentary deviation from the taut urgency of his first book may lead ultimately, the nature of his talent confirms his position as one of the half-dozen or so European poets of real importance.

Miss Scovell's new book, domestic in theme, circumscribed and unambitious in outlook, reveals her, nonetheless, as a poet of considerable technical accomplishment. Practically all her poems, well-formed and closely knit, come off. Technically she is more accomplished than either Mrs. Ridler or Miss Raine, though perhaps lacking the lyric perception of the latter, and with her second volume she goes towards building up what is, within its limits, a considerable achievement.

It is four years since the last of these of Mr. Waller's poems, and the delay in publication does him an injustice at this stage of his development. He will, I think, be glad to get this book speedily out of mind.

ALAN ROSS

DENISE LEVERTOFF, *The Double Image* (Cresset Press, 5s.); RONALD BOTTRALL, *Selected Poems* (Editions PL, 4s. 6d.); MAURICE LINDSAY, *The Enemies of Love* (Maclellan, 6s.).

> *You sit in empty chairs, gleam in unseeing eyes;*
> *having no home now, you cast your shadow*
> *over the atlas, and rest in the restlessness*
> *of our long nights as we lie, dreaming of Europe.*

This passage, taken from Miss Levertoff's 'Christmas 1944', contains a reason for commending her first collection of poems: it is the half-realized image of a Europe of which she, in her youth, can hardly have had experience more tangible than could be provided by her solitary dreams, or its legends and fairy-tales, told by those who remember it in a way which had become barely distinguishable from the telling of dreams. These are the poems one comes to value in her book: where the images, groping among destruction, do not reflect the ice of a carefully-planned corruption built on débris, but sanctify what has been lost and damned.

Miss Levertoff has tried to do just that, and therein lies the strength of her poems; and therefore I for one have been moved by them to an extent where their shyness and integrity and pathos endear even their touches of archness and youthful lack of control. As in the passage quoted above, though one often feels that Miss Levertoff is describing emotions and impressions as vaguely as possible, this only serves to heighten the haunting effect of impersonality induced by some of her poems: when they remind of fairy-tales like 'The Green Child' and folk-songs like *Es waren zwei Königskinder:*

> *But on the plains of childhood where the deer*
> *grazed undisturbed on amber afternoons*
> *lay already the shadow of starving snow,*
> *the first signs of fear.*

If some of the poems in this book are bad, that is only to be expected of any first collection, no matter how gifted its author. Her meditative exercises with their *false solemnity*, her attempts at 'sophistication' (*Intimate trivial glow of cigarettes*), the generalisations of 'The Barricades', for instance, and frequently her incantations, would indeed be embarrassing but for the conviction that, once she has overcome her inclination towards sentimental conclusions, she will make her *promise of bright leaves* come true.

I tried to review Mr. Bottrall's last book of poems here some time ago, and would now only like to add one or two points. In the rather too laudatory preface which Miss Sitwell has contributed to this book she writes that not even in his earliest poems could any hesitation or timidity of movement be found, and that he is a born technician. These are statements of interdependent facts: re-reading Mr. Bottrall's poems I have again been struck by the note of self-conscious assurance in all of them, caused partly by the enormous distance he manages to put between himself and his subject, but more by his undeniable virtuosity. I wrote of Miss Levertoff that she lacks control, meaning she is still forced to use poetic subterfuges in order to sustain the mood of her poems, and that sentimentality and commonplaces are sometimes the result; and elsewhere, hardly as the first to do so, I have written of the necessity for aloofness in the poet. But these statements do not contradict my opinion of Mr. Bottrall's verse: he keeps control and his distance to such a degree that they become all-important, that original mood or inspiration or what-have-you appear never to have existed.

Honey-hour
It is when living-brain cells in us breed
Homage to change—

he concludes one of the best poems in this book, and there are many others which are intellectually satisfying, because they are not intended to be more than that; but when he swings his thuribles over Love and Beauty and us commoners, he is like the ghoulish host giving his 'Instructions before Dinner' to James; the prefect ordering the fag about; the dilettant who to his real lameness adds a clever comedy of blindness and deafness, thus becoming a dubious cripple whose ailment one cannot immediately guess.

The poems in this book are selected from his four published volumes; none of them, of course, are entirely bad. The reader is taken on an upward ride from basic New Verses to sincere flattery of Pound and Auden; Mr. Bottrall's voice is at times overwhelmed by the echo of theirs.

The Scotsman has recently published in its correspondence columns an amusing, though to Sassenach and other foreign eyes somewhat vehement series of letters on the writings of poetry in 'plastic Scots', which is a name given to the half-language a number of bards now practise. This is not the place to add anything to that discussion, except perhaps a footnote: I have frequently been

Poetry and the People

KENNETH RICHMOND

A survey of English poetry from the earliest times to the present, viewed from an unusual angle. It is the author's thesis that the main stream of English poetry was diverted during the Renaissance into aristocratic or academic channels. He shows, however, how the peasant tradition has survived and concludes with an interesting chapter on present day tendencies. 8s. 6d. net

The Mint

A MISCELLANY OF LITERATURE, ART AND CRITICISM
EDITED BY GEOFFREY GRIGSON

'The chief merit of Mr. Grigson's book is that as Editor he tries to unite diversity of subject matter with an evenness of appropriate ability in composition, which is wholly admirable. We give a wholehearted welcome to 'The Mint' and look forward with confidence to further volumes.'—*Times Literary Supplement.*
8s. 6d. net

Poetry

Alex Comfort — THE SIGNAL TO ENGAGE

Both in his fine novel, 'The Power House', and in his two previous volumes of poetry, 'A Wreath for the Living' and 'Elegies', Alex Comfort has shown himself to be a writer with uncommon vision and fine poetic energy. 5s. net

E. J. Scovell — THE MIDSUMMER MEADOW

'Miss Scovell has a peculiarly individual talent: it has a flavour and scent of its own.'—Miss V. Sackville-West in *The Observer.* This is the second volume of Miss Scovell's verse. 5s. net

John Heath-Stubbs — THE DIVIDED WAYS

'John Heath-Stubbs is a very accomplished poet, whose verse has something of the quality of the music of strings and whose reveries have imagination, daring and depth,' wrote the *Times Literary Supplement.* This is the third volume of his verse to be published.

Norman McCaig — THE INWARD EYE

Norman McCaig's poems have appeared in a number of periodicals in this country and in America, and in the anthologies, 'The New Apocalypse', 'The White Horseman' and 'More Poems from the Forces'. He has published one previous collection of his poems, 'Far Cry'. This is the second volume of his verse.

Roland Mathias — BREAK IN HARVEST

The first collection of poems by a young writer who, by his short stories and poems, is playing a part in the renaissance of literature taking place in Wales to-day. 5s. net

ROUTLEDGE

charmed by the sound of poems written in this, to me, incomprehensible language, whatever it may be called. I would suggest that Mr. Lindsay, and anybody not endowed with greater gifts than he, should keep on writing in that melodious twang: the disappointment when they use plain English is apt to be too great.

If Mr. Bottrall is influenced by the intellectual's awful fear of Kitsch, and Miss Levertoff by the atmosphere of fairy-tales, Mr. Lindsay's poetic mind, at any rate when it works in English, seems to be permeated by a combination of simple nationalism of the *Scots wa hae* kind and a perfervid admiration of the poems of some of our better young writers: Alex Comfort, Nicholas Moore, and especially Ruthven Todd. The usual answer nowadays to a complaint against unacknowledged quotation of other poets' lines, or obvious imitation of their style, is that 'Eliot does it'. The comparison itself is a slander on Mr. Eliot. But quite apart from the ethics of it, it does seem to be carrying borrowing a little too far, when the writings of one's contemporaries are treated as a sort of bargain basement. If Mr. Lindsay rightly felt that the only few good things he has to say have recently been better expressed by Messrs. Comfort, Moore, Todd, *et al.*, was there a great deal of point in the publication of the present book? ERNST SIGLER

Mandrake

5

will appear at the beginning of May 1947, and will contain the first translation into English of 'Lenz' by Georg Büchner.

Copies (2/8 post free) are available from The Editor

MANDRAKE
WADHAM COLLEGE
OXFORD

Music and Poetry

The remaining meetings at the Ethical Church Hall, 4a Inverness Place, Queensway, Bayswater, will be held on 21st April, when Jack Lindsay, Honor Arundel and Arthur Ball will read their own work, and on 19th May.

Programmes on application to

ALEC CRAIG
140 HOLLAND ROAD
W.14